

GĪTAGOVINDA

towards a total
understanding



dr ranajit sarkar



RIJKSUNIVERSITEIT TE GRONINGEN

Publikaties van het Instituut voor Indische talen en culturen

No. 2

GĪTAGOVINDA: TOWARDS A TOTAL UNDERSTANDING

by

Dr. Ranajit Sarkar

Groningen

1974

"It is somewhat strange," writes A.A. Macdonell towards the end of the last century, "that a poem which describes the transports of sensual love (...) should (...) have received an allegorical explanation in a mystical religious sense. According to Indian interpreters the separation of Krishna and Radha, their seeking for each other and their final reconciliation represent the relation of the supreme deity to the human soul. This may possibly have been the intention of Jayadeva, though only as a leading idea, not to be followed out in detail."¹

This conclusion of Macdonell raises some questions about Jayadeva's poem *Gītagovinda*, which have not been adequately answered yet. And at the time when Macdonell wrote, it was not possible to answer them because of an ethical puritanism which tainted all literary criticisms. Today we are in a better position to deal more comprehensively with all problems social, ethical or literary which are related to sex. The poem has been often censured for its sensuality, its eroticism, yet at the same time, it seems, most readers have darkly felt that there might be something beyond the appearances. Not only Indians, but many Western scholars too have accepted the allegorical interpretation. Like many others Sylvain Lévi is reminded of the Song of Songs: "*Le Cantique des Cantiques*," he wonders, "*ne veut-il que magnifier les appels de la chair ou traduit-il dans une allégorie troublante les spasmes de l'âme qui cherche son Dieu?*" But he dare not give a solution, for he

¹ Macdonell 1971. 291.

concludes: "La question gravement débattue, est par essence insoluble." But though he finds the problem insoluble, he realises that the ideal of absolute love, be it sacred or profane, expresses itself in the same language: "L'amour absolu, qui attache et qui rive, qui donne tout et qui exige tout, ne change pas de nature ni de langage, soit qu'il incarne son idéal dans une forme humaine, soit qu'il le rêve hors du monde terrestre, dans la profondeur mystérieuse des cieux."¹

The allegory seems somewhat strange to Macdonell, and disconcerting to Lévi. Such is in fact also the reaction of most readers of the poem. Even when they appreciate the perfection of form, the grace of diction, the purity of the lyrical melody, they hesitate to cross the threshold of the mystery.

In order to cross the threshold we have to read the poem anew. Both the sensual and the allegorical interpretations are one-sided; both fence off a great part of the poem. This separation or opposition of the sensual and the allegorical comes from the fact that we have mostly considered body and soul, matter and spirit as two uncoordinated entities, one the negation of the other. But there is also a different vision, in which these apparent opposites blend into a symbolic whole.

Our aim here is to show that Gītagovinda is a world in itself, a world in which our ethical or religious conventions have no place, a world laid open before us through a new kind of perception. Poetry is not the reproduction of the world of our thoughts, feelings, sensations; it is a new creation in which our thoughts, feelings, sensations are freed from their conventional limitations in order to receive a new life, thus acquiring the power to express something they cannot ordina-

¹ Lévi 1937. 424.

rily express. We have to consider the poem of Jayadeva, like all poetical works in fact, as an open world. Formerly a critic worked under the assumption that a poem had one and only one meaning. And he tried to grasp that unique meaning through his critical discernment. But today many modern critics feel that a poem is not a closed world where only one solution is true and all the others are false. "Chaque époque," writes Roland Barthes, "peut croire, en effet, qu'elle détient le sens canonique de l'oeuvre, mais il suffit d'élargir un peu l'histoire pour transformer ce sens singulier en sens pluriel et l'oeuvre fermée en oeuvre ouverte."¹

Thus, as soon as we throw down the barrier of unique interpretation, the poem reappears with all its hidden mysteries. We accept that *Gītāgovinda* is a sensual poem, we accept also that it is an allegory of the play of the human soul with the deity; but we see that both these readings are monovalent. The first exhausts itself in the relation of the body and the senses, the second is nothing but a transposition of the same relation into a religious world. All objects in an allegorical world have a rigid one-to-one correspondence with the objects of the sensual world. Therefore, though it is a new world, it has no new or unforeseen relations. Once the rule of the game is fixed, the allegorical world becomes as closed as the sensual world. Then *Rādhā* is nothing but an abstract human soul, and *Kṛṣṇa* an abstract divine idea. But, as Macdonell has noticed, this interpretation does not always account for all the details, that is to say the one-to-one relation does not exist. And if it does not we have to drop completely the notion of an allegory. There remains then only the sensual meaning. But even that is not fully justifiable, for there are many things - the use of the *Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā* myth for example, which is so intensely charged with the mystic and Vaiṣṇava ardour - that hint at an extra-sensual world.

¹ Barthes 1966. 50.

Thus the unique interpretations prove to be partial, and we find the poem again open before us; we find that the sensuality there is as real as its mysticism. In fact it is a world which has its own characteristics, liable to be taken differently by different critics and readers. The poem becomes really symbolic. Symbolism, we should remember, is very different from cold allegory, as Albert Béguin points out: "... le symbolisme est toute autre chose que la froide allégorie: il y a encore le charme de la poésie, la souplesse d'une continuelle invention, et la chaleur secrète d'un contact sans cesse maintenu entre l'esprit et les choses, entre les mots et la réalité concrète."¹ These words were written in connection with French medieval mystic poetry, especially that of Chrétien de Troyes. Béguin says also that in medieval thought, in contradistinction to modern rationalistic thought, sensible reality is composed of symbols, or to put it differently, the appearance of things and their inner signification are so intricately associated that it is impossible to separate them. The immediate always points to something eternal. Like Chrétien de Troyes, Jayadeva lived in a world, the Vaiṣṇava world, in which man saw the Divine in all things. The sensual was fraught with the divine presence. It was therefore a ready ground for symbolic poetry. Jayadeva's poem is imbued with the spirit of devotion and piety of the Vaiṣṇava society. "Il y a symbole," writes P. Ricoeur, "lorsque le langage produit des signes de degré composé où le sens, non content de désigner quelque chose, désigne un autre sens qui ne saurait être atteint que dans et par sa visée."² This definition of symbol seems to be rather partial, for it does not consider the symbolism that lies hidden in the subject-matter, in the form and structure of the poem. The symbol begins to operate from the moment the poet chooses his subject. For many modern poets this first symbol may be absent, for often

¹ Béguin 1957. 49.

² Quoted by Barthes 1960. 50, note 2.

they do not choose a subject, the subject imposes itself upon them. But for older poets, especially the classical poets, the subject-matter had a greater significance: it was, we may say, the first general vision of the world he "was going to" create.

Jayadeva chose for his work the myth of Rādhā. I have not said the myth of Kṛṣṇa though the title of the poem refers to Kṛṣṇa the cowherd. If we read carefully the poem we find that Rādhā is the central figure. In the great cycle of Kṛṣṇa-legends Rādhā is a latecomer, but she soon achieves a special status for the Vaiṣṇava mystics and for the poets. And it is to be noted that through her, Classical Sanskrit poetry develops, almost at the very end of its great history, a new poetic form which was previously unknown to it: pure songs. The lyricism is narrowly connected with the Rādhā-myth and has a special importance in the symbolism, for love expresses itself poetically most easily through lyrical melody.

The myth of Rādhā is the individualisation of all the love and delight and sweetness that was there in the Kṛṣṇa-legend. She is the quintessence of Vaiṣṇavism, especially in Bengal at the time of Jayadeva and later with Caitanya and his followers. The individualisation and the sublimation of the love-relation between the human soul and the Divine is to a great extent the work of Jayadeva. We may presume that Rādhā existed before the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa, for we find there the mention of a special gopī who however remains unnamed. Does the Bhāgavata begin the individualisation of Rādhā? Or was Rādhā already the centre of the rāsa in the popular pre-Bhāgavata legends, which the Bhāgavata tries to suppress, foreseeing the danger of such an individualisation? The danger is real, as will be proved by some sects of Vaiṣṇavism which scarcely remembered the potency of the symbol and grasped only the outward appearance of eroticism.

The Bhāgavata does not complete the individualisation of

Rādhā. We only assume her existence from indirect hints. Kṛṣṇa disappears and the gopīs look for him in the forest. He is nowhere to be found, but the gopīs discover Kṛṣṇa's footprints and beside them another pair of feminine footprints and they say:

anayārādhito nūnaṃ bhagavān Harir īśvaraḥ
yan no viḥaya Govindah prīto yām anayad rahaḥ.

(Bhāg.Pur. 10. 30. 28)

"Lord Hari, the blessed One, is certainly propitiated by her, as he, the Cowherd-God, has secretly taken her along, abandoning us."

Though the Bhāgavata did not individualise Rādhā, yet we may assume that the popular religions had, long before Jayadeva, elaborated the myth. It is to the credit of Jayadeva to have seen the poetic potentiality that lay in this individualisation. Sylvain Lévi writes: "le Bengale est la pépinière des grands mystiques de l'Inde: l'éternel féminin l'obsède."¹ Jayadeva was certainly obsessed by the eternal feminine, like many later poets, down to Rabindranath Tagore.

Natural myths are concretisations of some unconscious urge in the mind of a people. When the myth takes form it reacts upon the individual in various ways: some accept the myth at its face value, but to others it comes as a revelation. They suddenly become aware of this subconscious collective urge which went into the creation of the myth. The myth at once becomes a symbol of their inner universe.

Jayadeva had this revelation of the potentiality of the myth. He found that Rādhā was the urge of the human soul aspiring to the Divine; she was also Jayadeva himself; the

¹ Lévi 1937. 425.

personal urge, the personal yearning, the personal passion, desire, sorrow, joy. The universal thus individualised becomes romantic and lyrical in Jayadeva's poetic vision. Jayadeva makes personal a myth that was universal; he knew what Rādhā represented for those who heard his songs, he could therefore make full use of the symbol of sensual love without having to look back to the meaning of the symbol. It is sufficient for him to remind his public once for all in the very first canto of the poem, of Kṛṣṇa's divinity. The first song (prabandha) is a hymn where the poet speaks of the ten incarnations of Kṛṣṇa; Kṛṣṇa is here not just one of Viṣṇu's incarnations, but he is Viṣṇu in his total manifestation:

daśakṛtikṛte Kṛṣṇāya tubhyaṃ namaḥ (20. 2)

"Salute to Thee, O Kṛṣṇa, thou who hast taken
the ten forms."

Here is the complete identification of the human Kṛṣṇa with the Supreme. Kṛṣṇa is not just an aspect, he is the All; he is at once the incarnate body and the Absolute. In the second song, again, the mythological aspect of Viṣṇu, destroyer of the asuras Madhu, Mura and Naraka (Madhu-Mura-Naraka-vināśana), is assimilated to the historico-legendary aspect of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma.

Jayadeva no longer needs to return to the symbolism of Kṛṣṇa.

In order to make my point clear I would like here to contrast this to the Divine Comedy. In the latter, the myth of Beatrice is individual. It is a myth that Dante has created. But he makes this individual myth universal; his readers do not know about Beatrice, nor about her apotheosis by the poet. Therefore the story of Dante's and Beatrice's love could very easily be mistaken for a human love-story, in which case it

would have lost all of its meaning. In order to avoid this misunderstanding we find Dante reminding his readers repeatedly of Beatrice's real significance, her spiritual meaning. We thus lose her as human; she becomes ethereal, the body is lost, the spirit only survives.

But Jayadeva's Rādhā is both body and spirit. He had no need to bother about the sublimation of sensual love; it was already present, powerfully, in the collective consciousness. Here the sublimation does not exclude the sensual. For in the Vaiṣṇava consciousness there is no separation between the flesh and the Spirit. "The Vaiṣṇava," writes Nolini Kanta Gupta, "in his passionate yearning seeks to carry as it were the whole world with him to his Lord; for he sees and feels Him not only in the inmost chamber of his soul, but meets Him also in and through his senses and in and through the world and its objects around."¹ Thus the sensual love in Jayadeva's poem is more than a mere allegory. In Vaiṣṇava love there exist two important steps: separation or absence (viraha), and union or eternal presence (milana). Both these steps are physical as well as spiritual. Jayadeva and most Vaiṣṇava poets, especially the Bengali Vaiṣṇavas, have grasped the physical as the concrete form of the spiritual. Thus eroticism is at once sensual and spiritual. This is the plural meaning of the erotic symbolism which we have to consider next.

¹ Gupta 1970. 94.

Erotic Symbolism

The Hermetic tradition says that "the below is like the above, only inverted." In reality we find a continuum of idea from the highest heights down to the lowest depths. It is only the rational scientific mind that tries to break the continuum into two opposites. Kāma was originally the great principle of love; the intuitive global vision had no need to break it up into two halves, the higher and the lower. The first vision was unitary, and therefore poetic. But later the ethical mind, which is separative, divided the vision into the lower and the higher: into kāma and preman. Kāma is carnal desire; preman is pure love. But in essence kāma and preman are the same; or we may say that kāma is the concretisation of preman in the human senses. The poetic vision does not make the distinction; therefore kāma embodies also preman, when it is seen symbolically. The Vaiṣṇava poets, not the Vaiṣṇava theologians, saw kāma as the global experience of love; profane or carnal love as well as sacred or spiritual love are encompassed in this symbol of love, kāma, or in the personification of Kāmadeva, the god of love.

Jayadeva introduced this symbol in Sanskrit kāvya. In Purāṇic literature, the Bhāgavata had already shown the inherent force of this symbol. Jayadeva grasped this and, taking it in conjunction with the individualisation of Rādhā composed his emotional, ecstatic and symbolic poem.

This is something quite new in the history of classical kāvya. Religious hymns in kāvya style had been written before, but there was no sustained work of the kind. On the other hand the recognition of kāma as a potent spiritual symbol in kāvya literature, was also to a certain extent responsible for the final and definite decline of kāvya. For this recognition destroyed once for all the most vital force of kāvya : kāma as it was visualised by the kāmāśāstra.

The classical poetry or *kāvya* originated from the mind turning outwards, and making the distinction between secular and religious. The epics and earlier the Vedic literature made no such distinction. Life-experience was an unbroken whole; but in the classical age we find the body and the spirit falling apart. On one side, philosophically, the stress falls on life-negation; on the other side, poetically, the stress is all on life, on the vital and physical urge, on the senses, on pure aesthetic enjoyment of life. There is, in this poetic vision, as Sri Aurobindo says, ample room for "the freedom of the purely intellectual and aesthetic activities, much scope too for the hedonisms of the vital and the refinement of the emotional being, a cultivation of the art and rhythmic practice of life. There is a highly intellectualised vital stress and a manysided interest in living, an indulgence of an at once intellectual and vital and sensuous satisfaction extending even to a frankness of physical and sensual experience ..."¹ With Jayadeva, physical and sensual experiences regained their pre-classical status of a total experience. After him therefore, *kāvya* could no longer be a pure intellectual or aesthetic activity, for it had attained a new mystical, symbolically total, significance; neither could it be vital or sensuous satisfaction, as a spiritual satisfaction and delight underlay the poetic creation.

The tendency towards the end of the classical age which produced Vaiṣṇava poetry may be summed up in Sri Aurobindo's words, "... the Indian mind is always compelled by its master impulse to reduce all its experiences of life to the corresponding spiritual term and factor and the result was a transfiguring of even these most external things into a basis for new spiritual experience. The emotional, the sensuous, even the sensual motions of the being, before they could draw the

¹ Sri Aurobindo 1972. 14. 338.

soul farther outward, were taken and transmuted into a psychical form and, so changed, they became the elements of a mystic capture of the Divine through the heart and the senses and a religion of the joy of God's love, delight and beauty."¹

If we look back to classical poetry we find the two most important ideas of alaṃkāraśāstra: kāma or śṛṅgāra, love, as the basic principle of poetic creation, and rasa, poetic delight and enjoyment of poetic beauty. The same principles are at the basis of Vaiṣṇavism. According to the Vaiṣṇava, writes Radhakrishnan, "the chief character of God is love and the power of joy. (...) The highest manifestation of the cit-power in Krishna is the power of delight (hlādinī). Rādhā is the essence of this delight-giving power."²

The poetic delight (rasa) and the principle of kāma take, in the Vaiṣṇava vision, a mystical turn. Jayadeva accepts both these levels of meaning of kāma, and therefore the eroticism there is symbolic. A symbol conceals as much as it reveals. Speaking of the meaning of symbol René Wellek and Austin Warren say that it is "an object which refers to another object, but which demands attention also in its own right, as a presentation."³ In Jayadeva the presentation, which is poetry also in its own right, is eroticism (śṛṅgāra). But at the same time, we have seen, it refers to a higher psycho-religious experience. Jayadeva was fully aware of this ambivalence, for he writes:

yadi Hari-smaraṇe sarasam mano yadi vilāsa-kalāsu kutūhalam
madhura-komala-kānta-padāvalīṃ śṛṇu Jayadeva-sarasvatīm.

(8.1)

¹ Sri Aurobindo 1972. 359f.

² Radhakrishnan 1962. 762.

³ Wellek and Warren 1968. 189.

"If you want to fill your heart with delight by the remembrance of Hari,
if you desire to enjoy the art of love,
listen then to these inspired poems of Jayadeva, -
sweet, tender, bright."

We see that Jayadeva proposes two paths of appreciation of his poem. The first is religious; the second hedonistic, for the pleasure of the senses. At the close of the poem he repeats the same idea, and there he adds a third point which, we shall see, is of great importance for the symbolism; it is the music of the poetry, and the actual enjoyment of the songs which were sung, while Padmāvatī, Jayadeva's wife, danced:

yad gāndharva-kalāsu kauśalam anudhyānam ca yad vaiṣṇavam
yac chr̥ṅgāra-viveka-tattva-racana-kāvyesu līlāyitam
tat sarvaṃ Jayadeva-paṇḍita-kaveḥ Kṛṣṇaika-tānātmanah
sānandāḥ pariśodhayantu sudhiyaḥ śrī-Gītagovindataḥ.

(199.3)

"that which is skill in the art of the heavenly musicians,
that which is reflection on Viṣṇu,
that which is gracefully expressed in poetry to create
love's discernment, -
all that, O wise men, enjoy,
in Gītagovinda, composed by the learned poet Jayadeva
with mind fixed on the Dark God."

In this verse we also notice that Jayadeva declares himself as Kṛṣṇaikatānātman - one whose self is fixed on Kṛṣṇa.

Vaiṣṇava poetry in Bengal even after Jayadeva, poetry written in Bengali and Vrajabuli, has the same double façade: "... the Vaiṣṇava poetry of Bengal makes to the devout mind a physical and emotional image or suggestion of the love of the human soul for God, but to the profane is nothing but a sensuous and passionate

love poetry hung conventionally round the traditional human-divine personalities of Krishna and Radha."¹ Jayadeva knew this very well and therefore he addresses his poem to the rasika. This word rasika points to two different notions, one aesthetic, the other mystic. The poet combines the notion of poetry's rasa or enjoyment, with the rasa of the Vaiṣṇava, the delight of God's play; and we should remember that this play is both in the flesh and in the spirit. A true rasika, the king of the rasikas, writes a Bengali Vaiṣṇava poet, is one who can dangle the frog at the snake's mouth: -I quote from memory-

sāper mukhete bhekere khelāy
tābe tā rasika-rāj

The play in the flesh is as perilous as dangling the frog at the snake's mouth. But a real rasika sees the spirit in the flesh and is not engulfed by its downward pull.

The image of human love is a "natural symbol,"² especially when one tries to express the highest love. The same idea is expressed by Novalis when he says that "love is nothing but the highest natural poetry."³ Kāma is the natural symbol of preman, through the inversion of the Hermetic saying. Indeed in poetry we often find a kind of reflected imagery. The higher, sublimer and more etherial the experience, the lower and concreter is the metaphor and the expression used. This symbolism also reveals the underlying unity between the two. "Le symbole," writes Georges Cattaui, "est révélateur d'une réalité intime et occulte."⁴ Jayadeva uses erotic images of kāma, but there are moments when

¹ Sri Aurobindo. 1972. 303.

² Dimock 1966. 4.

³ Quoted by Cattaui 1965. 18.

⁴ Cattaui 1965. 16.

the true spiritual nature of love expresses itself spontaneously in words like: smara-garala-khaṇḍanam (154,5) "cure of the poison of desire" or prema-hema-nikaṣopalatām (170,2) "the touchstone for testing the gold of love."

At the moment of the supreme union all distinction is forgotten, Jayadeva gives us an unalloyed picture of physical union, any explicit hint at the other term of the symbol would have marred the complete and intuitive enjoyment of the union.

pratyūhaḥ pulakāṅkureṇa nibiḍaśleṣe nimeṣeṇa ca
kṛīḍākūta-vilokite 'dhara-sudhā-pāne kathā-kelibhiḥ
ānandādhigamena manmatha-kalā-yuddhe'pi yasminn abhūd
udbhūtaḥ sa tayoṛ babhūva suratārambhaḥ priyaṁbhāvukāḥ.

(189.3)

"As their love increased in delight
even the thrills became an obstacle to firm embraces,
the closing of eyes to longing,
the love-talk to nectarous kisses,
and the surge of bliss to love's intensity."

We may understand the absoluteness of the union, and the transmutation of the carnal into the spiritual when we see that Jayadeva considers the normal pleasure of union as hindrances (pratyūha); not only are the pulakāṅkura, nimeṣa and kathākeli hindrances, but also the ānandādhigama; even the joy of union has to be transcended in order to experience the supreme identity. This union is finally a mystical identification. Kṛṣṇa says earlier that even Rādhā's body (vapus) is inseparable from his own:

mayā saha tava vapur etad abhedam (140.4)

"the identity of your body with mine."

Carnal symbolism has been a powerful instrument in the mystical poetry of all time, in India and elsewhere. The siddhācāryas of Northern India, some centuries earlier than Jayadeva, used the symbolism in their enigmatic mystical utterances. Writes Saraha: "Love is in the heart of the lotus-thunder. Who is there within these three spheres whose desire is not fulfilled by its enjoyment?"¹ And by love Saraha means sexual love, suraa-vilāsa (surata-vilāsa). Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism was greatly influenced by the doctrine of the siddhācāryas, and tradition says that Jayadeva was a Sahajiyā.²

The medieval Christian mystics, the Sufis and also many modern mystic poets have used this symbolism with great power. John Donne used erotic images. Addressing God he writes:

Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain
But am betrothed unto your enemy:
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

(Batter my heart)

Both in Jayadeva and in Donne the experience is a mystical union, or the desire of union. A pure mystic may remain content with the experience only, but a poet wants to capture the ineffable in words. Words however are weak and therefore the poet has to give a purer meaning—"donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu,"³ said Mallarmé.

¹ Quoted by Sen 1970, Vol.I, p. 50.

² For Sahajiyā see Dimock 1966.

³ Quoted by Lagarde and Michard 1961. 531.

The flesh and the relation of the flesh to the Spirit constitute the basic symbol, the body of Jayadeva's poem; i.e. the spirit become flesh. But the poet has now the task of bringing out all the hidden potentiality, the hidden power of suggestion involved in the symbol. He must reconstruct through the Word the entire wealth of experience. Poetry, according to Baudelaire, has to be suggestive magic - "magie suggestive."

Speaking of Baudelaire, Marcel Raymond writes that poetry is the ineffable expression of the soul-experience which the poet creates from the materials of sense-perceptions and memory. "Et cette expression," he continues, "bien que les éléments dont elle se compose paraissent se rapporter aux choses de la nature - n'en sera pas moins essentiellement surnaturelle. Car l'âme de par son origine et sa destinée, ne trouve sa vraie patrie que dans l'au-delà spirituel où plonge la nature. La mission de la poésie est d'ouvrir une fenêtre sur cet autre monde, qui est en fait le nôtre, de permettre au moi d'échapper à ses limites et de se dilater jusqu'à l'infini."¹

And in order to open this window, this magic casement, the poet uses the inherent correspondences that exist between sound and sense, between image and reality, between the elements of this world and those of the other. We shall now see how Jayadeva expresses the ineffable soul through images, metaphors, rhythm, music and secret associations between the phenomenon of earthly nature with a certain mystic atmosphere.

¹ Raymond 1966. 22-23.

Fleshy dress

The English poet, Vaughan, writes:

But felt through all this fleshy dress
Bright shoots of everlastingness.

(The Retreat)

One of the means by which the poet makes the fleshy dress transparent -or rather translucent-, for in mystic-symbolic poetry of Jayadeva's type a veil is kept between the two terms of the symbol, is the use of images. Through the image the abstract is made palpable, and we can easily pass from the flesh to the spirit. Let us take the following couplet:

Padmā-payodhara-taṭi-parirambha-lagna-kāśmīra-mudritam
uro Madhusūdanasya
vyaktānūrāgam iva khelad-anāṅga-kheda-svedāmbu-pūram
anupūrayatu priyaṃ vah.

(25.1)

"May the breast of Madhusūdana, on which love was, as it
were, manifest in the mark made in the embrace, by the
saffron-smeared rounded breast of Lakṣmī -
may that breast moist with the sweat of passion-play
give fulfilment to your desires."

The physical mark of the kumkuma (saffron) on Kṛṣṇa's chest is compared to the expression of love, love become visible. The red imprint sheds its opacity and assumes the bright hue of the soul. The whole poem, in Jayadeva's words, may be characterized as luminous: ujjala-gītam (24,7) - a bright song.

Jayadeva often makes sacrifices to the demand of poetic conventions and uses worn-out metaphors. The worn-out traditional imagery of classical kāvya has a very practical role in Jayadeva's

poem. It was a part of the poet's craft and it gave pleasure to his hearers by their very traditionalism. With the help of these metaphors, bhrū-cāpa, kaṭākṣa-viśikha, bimbādhara, vadanam indu-sandīpanam, vijitarambham ūrudvayam, -eyebrow-bow, glance-arrows, lips of bimba-fruits, face like the bright moon, thighs excelling the trunk of the plantain -, Jayadeva was trying to reassure his hearers that his poem was not something alien; these metaphors also help to familiarize the characters. The object of traditional metaphors is not to give the shock of sudden revelation, but the recognition of already known traits of beauty. The hearers feel that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are the same nāyaka and nāyikā -the hero and the heroine- of traditional poetry. On this recognition the poet can now superimpose the new perception to which he wants to give expression. Thus, for example:

tvad-vāmyena samaṃ samagram adhunā tigmāṃsur astaṃ gato
Govindasya manorathena ca samaṃ prāptaṃ tamaḥ sandratām.

(100.1)

"The sun has now completely disappeared
so has your adversity;
and darkness has deepened like Kṛṣṇa's desire."

This verse makes the separation more poignant. If Kṛṣṇa were a far-off God, untouched by sufferings, the poem would have been a cold allegory. But we find that not only Rādhā is afflicted by the absence, but all light fades away in Kṛṣṇa's world too because Rādhā is angry. Kṛṣṇa's desire makes the darkness deeper. We see again that the verse surpasses the bounds of flesh; the sun and the darkness are at once a natural and a psychic phenomenon.

Another image is revelatory of the poem's ambivalence:

pūrvam yatra samaṃ tvayā Ratipater āsāditāḥ siddhayaś
tasminn eva nikuñja-manmatha-mahātīrthe punar Mādhavaḥ

dhyāyaṃs tvāṃ anīṣaṃ japann api tavaivālāpa-mantrāvalīṃ
bhūyas tvat-kuca-kumbha-nirbhara-parīrambhāmṛtaṃ vāñchati.

(93.3)

"Into the same bower, the holy shrine of love,
where in the past Mādhava's passions had been fulfilled,
he comes again, thinking of you, repeating
the sacred words of love you had uttered, and
yearns for the nectarous embrace of your full breasts."

The profane and the sacred are intermingled, carnal love is expressed through words taken from the religious vocabulary: tīrtha, dhyāna, japa, mantra, amṛta. In this relation we may quote what Austin Warren writes about Donne. In the image we have two spheres, for instance the carnal and the spiritual. The fact that "the two spheres," says Warren, "repeatedly summon up each the other, may be supposed to show their real interpenetration in the creative psyche of the poet: thus in Donne's 'Songs and Sonnets,' his poems of profane love, the metaphoric gloss is constantly drawn from the Catholic world of sacred love: to sexual love he applies the Catholic concepts of ecstasy, canonization, martyrdom, relics, while in some of his 'Holy Sonnets' he addresses God in violent erotic figures."¹

The study of the imagery helps us greatly, no doubt, to break through the fleshy dress. But there are other means which we have now to take into consideration. In Jayadeva's poetry, sound-symbolism, i.e. music, rhythm, lyrical melody are more important than imagery. His poem, we know, was meant to be heard; it was recited and sung; therefore we may easily understand that the symbolic evocation had to depend to a large extent on the sound-effects.

¹ Wellek and Warren 1968. 207.

Poetic imagination can be of various kinds depending on the sense-perception through which the poet imagines. The most frequent are the visual and the auditory imaginations; but there are poets, Baudelaire for instance, to whom the world reveals itself in smells as much as in images. Sanskrit poetics always emphasized the marriage of sound and sense, therefore sound-symbolism is an integral part of Sanskrit poetry. Kālidāsa is an unsurpassed master both in visual imagination and sound-effect. But Jayadeva gives a special turn to this sound-effect. He makes poetry lyrical. Kālidāsa's sound-effects are subtler, more complex, ampler; Jayadeva's are pure melody, played so to say on a single string, like the music the bāuls of Bengal play on the ektārā, a one-stringed musical instrument.

Gītagovinda consists of recitative verses and songs. The form of the poem is very original and has a special significance. The recitative verse represents stability whereas the songs represent flux; the divine līlā (play) enacted on the universal stage. It has been suggested that Jayadeva got this form from the yātrās of Bengal. Most probably this is true; but we should remember that the crude form of the yātrā is not capable of evoking this duality of flux and stability.

The main body of the poem consists of songs. Songs as a literary form did not exist in classical literature. Songs were known in the popular folk-literatures, in Apabhraṃśa and in the developing modern languages; the earliest specimen of Bengali poetry, the collection of the mystic songs -Caryācaryāvinīścaya- was meant to be sung. These songs were composed almost a century before the time of Jayadeva, sometime in the 11th century. They follow the tradition of popular songs. Two poets at least took up the song-form from popular Apabhraṃśa literature and introduced it in Sanskrit.¹ Both turned for their subject to the Kṛṣṇa-

¹ Cf. Sen 1970. 41.

myth. From the Kashmiri poet Kṣemendra, about a century before Jayadeva we have one song, in his kāvyā, Daśāvatara-caritra:

lalita-vilāsa-kalā-sukha-khelana-
lalanā-lobhana-śobhana-yauvana-
 mānita-nava-Madane
ali-kula-kokila-kuvalaya-kajjala-
kāla-Kalinda-sutā-vivalaj-jala-
 Kālīya-kula-damane
Keśi-kiśora-mahāsura-māraṇa-
dāruṇa-Gokula-durita-vidāraṇa-
 Govardhana-dharāṇe
kasya na nayana-yugaṃ rati-sajje
majjati manasi ja-tarala-taraṅge
 vara-ramanī-ramane

"Whose eyes will not plunge into those tremulous waves of love, (Kṛṣṇa), clad in delightful garments, beloved of the most beautiful maidens, (Kṛṣṇa), the new god of love whom shining Youth, desire of women, worships in the joyous expression of the voluptuous art of love, (Kṛṣṇa), subduer of the dynasty of the serpent Kāliya and of the rolling waters of Yamunā, dark like swarms of bees, cuckoos, blue lotuses or collyrium, (Kṛṣṇa), remover of Gokula's terrible calamity by killing the colt Keśin and other great demons, and then by lifting up Mount Govardhana."¹

The similarity in style of Jayadeva's songs and Kṣemendra's is striking. The only possible reason for this must be that Apabhraṃśa songs about Kṛṣṇa were very popular; they had also acquired a certain special stylistic trend which influenced the

¹ Ksemendra, *Daśavatāra-caritra* 8. 173, quoted by Sen 1970. 42.

two Sanskrit poets.

Music is an inseparable part of Vaiṣṇava mysticism. The Vaiṣṇavas had grasped the power of music as a means of spiritual realisation. Kīrtana was a recognized method of worship, and Kṛṣṇa's flute had early become a potent symbol; the sound of the flute was God calling the human soul to come to Him. Thus for Jayadeva songs had, apart from the aesthetic pleasure given to the audience, a mystic significance; the music was worship, it was the path of communion with God.

"Pour le poète," says Cattau, "le mot, quittant son office usager, revêt une valeur de signe musical ou magique."¹ We might rather say musical and magical. For word-music in poetry is also an incantatory magic. Language in Jayadeva or in the French poet Verlaine, is used for its incantatory value. The vision is created with the help of sound. Jayadeva's lyrics were actually sung and were meant to be sung. When we read them we certainly miss a great deal of their enchantment. We have just mentioned Verlaine; and Verlaine brings to our mind Wagner. Verlaine's ars poetica was a direct outcome of the Wagnerian experience. And we find also some similarities between Jayadeva and Wagner. If we have to compare Gītagovinda with a Western art-form, it should be the opera, and more particularly the Wagnerian. Verlaine tried to combine in his poetry the two elements of Wagnerian music-drama, word and music, in one verbal structure. So we have his famous line: "De la musique avant toute chose." Alain Bosquet, speaking of Verlaine, says: "Les harmonies intérieures, il préfère laisser le soin à la musique de les traduire; autrement dit à une prosodie aussi proche que possible de la musique."²

Jayadeva indicates precisely the rāga (melody) and tāla

¹ Cattau 1965. 16.

² Bosquet 1961. 47-48.

(time-beats) of each song. But here we are not interested in the pure musical effects of the melody. We are concerned with the verbal music, the music of which Verlaine speaks. And when we read Jayadeva we find that his songs have an intense verbal melody independent of the musical rāga.

There are 24 songs (prabandha) in Gītagovinda. They are, as we have said, like a flux on the sub-structure of the recitative verses. We should note that the recitative verses have a greater solidity, because of their greater sense-value. And this solidity is well translated in the rhythm of the verse itself.

Let us take an example:

tava kitava! vidhāyā-manda-kandarpa-cintāṃ
rasa-jalanidhi-magnā dhyāna-lagnā mṛgākṣī.

(108.5)

"Meditating upon her deep love for you, O Rogue,
She, the deer-eyed girl,
languishes drowned in a sea of love -"

The rhythm is slow; the use of consonant-clusters, of the syllabic metre instead of the moraic metre of the songs, and the emphasis on the meaning give stability to this quatrain. Compare this with a few lines of any of the songs:

dhīra-samīre Yamunā-tīre vasati vane vanamālī
gopī-pīna-payodhara-mardana-cañcala-kara-yuga-śālī

(95.1)

"He who wears the garlands of wild flowers,
he who crushes with his restless hands the swelling
breasts of the gopīs,
that Kṛṣṇa dwells in the woodlands on the banks of
Yamunā,
fanned by the gentle breezes."

We see that the words are here without any weight, any density; the meaning is secondary - the musical movement is all-important. Can we ignore this evident symbolism of the structure? Stability and movement, mass and fluidity are the flesh and the spirit, like Nature and God.

Highest poetry possesses a rhythmic resonance, which Western critics call suggestiveness, and the Indian rhetoricians dhvani. This musical vibration is very different from Jayadeva's musicality. Dhvani is a subtle soul-vibration which rises as much from the significance as from the phonetic quality of the verse. We perceive it through the soul. But Jayadeva's, like Verlaine's, is a sensual music. Its primary appeal is to the senses. And if we are not careful enough it may stop with the senses. Whereas the very opposite applies to suggestiveness or dhvani. We hardly perceive it with our senses, and if we are not sensitive enough, we may altogether miss the vibration.

Jayadeva's is a sensual music - rich, almost cloying; but how appropriate to the carnal symbolism! Madhura (sweetness) is the attribute of love in Vaiṣṇavism; Kṛṣṇa is madhura incarnate. And if we take into account the synaesthetic correlation, what can represent more concretely such a sensual sweetness than this palpable music? Jayadeva has himself indicated a tactile and a visual correspondence: he calls his poem, ujjala (luminous) and komala (soft). But we should remember that this luminosity is not that of the noon; it is the sensual luminosity of the red tropical twilight.

Most of the songs give us the impression of an easy rhythmic flow. Let us consider the song no. 14 (119.2ff.). There are several images which evoke flow, looseness, liquidity:

galita-kusuma-dara-vilulita-keśā,

her hair is slightly dishevelled and the flowers
have dropped down

kuca-kalaśopari taralita-hārā

a necklace quivering on her full breasts

cañcala-kunḍala -

the restless earrings

mukharita-rasana-jaghana-gati-lolā

the girdle tinkling with the movement of her hips.

When we read aloud, we at once feel the flux. Jayadeva avoids harsh consonantal clusters - in fact double consonants are very sparingly used, they appear only as small ripples in order to break the monotony of the flow.

The fluidity and sweetness is also expressed through the alliteration. There is almost no poetry without alliteration; yet it is a dangerous thing. It can be overdone. And we cannot deny that Jayadeva has almost always too much of it. However, this excess of alliteration is not altogether gratuitous; it works insistently on our senses in order to create a hypnotic state in which the hearer loses his awareness of day-to-day reality. The experience of love's sweetness -in Vaiṣṇava love even separation is sweet- is thus transformed into pure lyrical melody.

Metre, rhyme, alliteration, assonances are the means by which the sweetness is produced.

There is an inner rhythm which the poet has to express. The emotional flow of sweetness that the poet has felt has to be communicated to the hearer; this is the great problem of poetry. The inner rhythm has to have a physical basis in order to manifest itself. This physical basis is the metre. There is a verse which is metrically free, in which not the metre but some other poetic elements are intensified so as to create a free rhythm. But great poets have used metre as the physical pattern of the inner rhythm. The metrical schemes that Jayadeva utilises in the

songs are very few. But the lines are modulated through variations within the scheme. Most of the songs have a dactylic (- u u) movement, where the first long syllable of a foot is often replaced by two shorts; sometimes also before a caesura or in the end of a line the dactylic foot is replaced by a spondee (- -).

nindati candanam indu-kiranam anu vindati khedam adhīram

(76.3)

Here the fourth foot has four short syllables instead of the dactyl. The line is a dactylic heptameter; if we compare it with the classical hexameter we find a great difference though the pattern is similar. The hexameter has a grand epic movement, whereas here it is purely lyrical. Yet there is a resemblance; the oceanic surge of the epic movement is here transformed into a quieter flow, but the vastness, the sense of the ocean remains, subdued, transmuted into a rhythmical sweetness. Strength is replaced by delight. The rhythm communicates to us the sense of the divine breath which has become a dance of delight. The lyrical movement of the metre seems to come from the fact that Jayadeva often replaces a long syllable with two short ones, which breaks the crest of the wave into a quieter flow. We should also notice that the long syllables are often vocalic rather than consonantal. When several consonants follow one another, there is a lengthening of the syllable: the effect of this positionally long syllable is quite different from that of a naturally long one; the former gives the impression of strength, the latter of fluidity. In addition to these, we should notice the use of alliterations, internal rhymes, end-rhymes, assonances and of liquid sounds.

For the appreciation and understanding of poetry where music and rhythm express more than the sense of the words, the study of the metrical scheme is of the utmost importance. We

should remember that this scheme is far from arbitrary, for it responds to the psychological demands of the poetic experience. According to Mallarmé the poet has to guess spontaneously what form will fit his expression; if he is unable to do so, it is useless to restrict himself to a given form: "ne pas l'avoir deviné par soi et d'abord établit l'inutilité de s'y contraindre."¹ The same idea is expressed by Sri Aurobindo: "There is a double process, his (the poet's) state of mind and spirit suggests its own syllabic measures, and the metre again confirming, prolonging, and recreating the original state of mind and spirit."² The metrical pattern is the formal image of the poetic state; the reader or the hearer can therefore, through the opposite process, reach the poetic state by a sympathetic understanding of the metrical rhythm.

But metrical structure, rhythm and music in poetry do not exist without meaning. The lettrist experiment failed; for sounds without sense may have a certain magical power, as the Tantric formulas -hlīm, klīm, etc. - but in poetry music manifests itself in meaningful words.

There is an absolute interdependence of word and sound in poetry; the denominative sense of a word is given a poetic meaningfulness through the word-sound. Metrical structure is one means of bringing the musical value forward. The refrain is another. Other means that Jayadeva frequently employs are rhyme and alliteration. These are not essential to poetry but they may be adventitious aids when effectively used. The rhyme in Jayadeva enhances the musical value of a verse-line; but it is the alliteration which, along with the metrical pattern, creates the sound-symbolism of the poem.

¹ Mallarmé 1949. 244.

² Sri Aurobindo 1952. 25.

Wellek says that there is "within a given linguistic system, something like a 'physiognomy' of words, a sound-symbolism far more pervasive than mere onomatopoeia. There is no doubt that synaesthetic combinations and associations permeate all languages and that these correspondences have been, quite rightly, exploited by the poets."¹

The alliterations in Jayadeva cannot be brushed aside as mere ornaments. Jayadeva has, as we have seen, characterized his poem by two attributes: ujjvala and madhura. According to Carl Stumpf and Wolfgang Köhler the consonants can be divided into dark (labials and velars) and bright (dentals and palatals).² Rimbaud also gave a one-to-one relationship between vowels and colours. No rigid classification seems to be possible, but it is undeniable that there exists a synaesthetic relationship of the kind. Jayadeva's songs have the quality of a shimmering light-moonlight playing on Yamunā and in the woodlands- with a mellifluous sound-scheme which is sometimes soft-flowing, sometimes jingling with the nūpurās (ankle-bells):

sañcarad-adhara-sudhā-madhura-dhvani-mukharita-
mohana-vaṁśam
calita-dṛg-añcala-cañcala-mauli-kapola-vilola-
vatamśam

(45.1)

"his moving lips made the enchanted flute vibrant
with nectar-sweet sounds,
the earrings dangled on his cheeks as he cast playful
glances and tossed his head."

It is not possible to bring out all the evocative implica-

¹ Wellek and Warren 1968. 162.

² Vide Wellek and Warren 1968. 162.

tions of Jayadeva's music, but one thing seems to be certain, the flow and liquidity, the brightness and the sweetness, sublimate the carnal desire into a purer love, as if the weight, the veil, the darkness inherent in carnal love have been thrown away; the coverings have fallen down. The throwing away of the veils, of clothes, vigalitavasanam, is in fact a powerful symbol that runs through the whole poem.

Jayadeva has exploited the sound-symbolism for the concretisation of his perception. "The effects of the words," write Ogden and Richards, "due directly (i.e. physiologically) to their sound qualities are probably slight and only become important through such cumulative and hypnotic effects as are produced through rhythm and rhyme."¹

This physiological effect is what Jayadeva achieves; and we are led into the very heart of the mystery. Music opens the sealed doors of perception; the world of Jayadeva, his Vṛndāvana stands revealed before our senses.

¹ Ogden and Richards 1966. 236.

The poetic Vṛndāvana

meghair meduram ambaram vana-bhuvah
śyamās tamāla-drumair
naktaṃ bhīrur ayaṃ tvam eva tad imaṃ
Rādhe gr̥haṃ prāpaya
itthaṃ Nanda-nideśataś calitayoḥ
praty-adhva-kuñja-drumaṃ
Rādhā-Mādhavayor jayanti Yamunā-kūle
rahaḥ-kelayaḥ.

(1.1)

"The sky is thick with clouds; the woodlands are dark with tamāla-trees; it is night and he (Kṛṣṇa) is afraid. Therefore, you, O Rādhā, escort him to the house. Victorious be the occult love-games of Rādhā and Mādhava who thus bidden by Nanda moved on along pathways, through bowers and trees on the banks of Yamunā."

With this very first stanza, the benedictory verse, which apparently is unconnected to the later events, we enter into the world of rich mystery, a world one has to grasp with the senses. This is the mystic Vṛndāvana where the great drama of secret līlā, (rahaḥ kelayaḥ) is going to be enacted.

This stanza represents, indeed, the curtain that has to be lifted before the play begins. The darkness, the night, the clouds hide what is behind; unless the veil is removed one cannot enter into the season of love, vasanta. The rich fleshiness of the rhythm makes the darkness palpable; you are faced with an atmosphere of voluptuousness, but fraught with a sense of wonder, something primal and eternal.

When we look behind the veil, when the curtain is raised, we see the stage laid for the enactment of the play. It is Vṛndāvana, with its tamāla trees, dark like Kṛṣṇa's body, with Yamunā, the dark river, flowing along, blue peacocks and black cuckoos - the whole world is full of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa pervades Vṛndāvana, not only is he the dark boy but he has become birds, beasts, trees - all is Kṛṣṇa. He is the darkness, sensible, tangible, mystical. Such is indeed Rādhā's vision; she sees him everywhere.

paśyati diśi diśi rahasi bhavantam ... (105.3)

"she sees you, secretly, on every side ..."

and:

śliṣyati cumbati jaladhara-kalpam
Harir upagata iti timiram analpam
(107.3)

"She clasps, she kisses the deep cloud-like darkness
and thinks: 'Hari has arrived.'"

The season, we have seen, is Spring; with all the traditional symbols, the poetic conventions, the clichés. This setting creates the mood necessary for entering into this love-world. "... the reader," writes Dimock, "unfamiliar with the conventions, finds in Vaiṣṇava poetry what seems like an overabundance of cakora birds and peacocks and dark clouds. But he does well to remember that the roles of these are formal; the peacock, with his neck the color of Kṛṣṇa and his uncontrollable urge to dance in the rainy season, which is the time for lovers, both defines and enhances for the reader or listener the poem's mood."¹ This was said in relation to the Bengali

¹ Dimock, Op.cit. p. 21.

Vaiṣṇava poetry, but the same statement in essence holds good for Jayadeva. Here the season is Spring; varsā (the rainy Season) and vasanta (Spring) are the two seasons when love expresses itself most intensely. Though the later Bengali Vaiṣṇava poetry emphasizes the rainy season, Jayadeva has set his play in Spring. Conventional images, clichés do not give us the sense of discovery, but they have a strong evocative value, which arises "moins d'eux-mêmes que des ensembles structurés auxquels ils appartiennent."¹ We can also quote here what R. Guiette says in relation to Medieval French poetry. He says that the poetic charm arises from "une invention formelle, tant dans l'organisation thématique que dans le chant. Se servant de matériaux traditionnels et de lieux communs, le poète donne au langage le pouvoir de se transformer en puissance de rénovation: le lieu commun, grâce à la forme, acquiert un accent unique."²

Jayadeva, thanks to the lyrical form, gives to the conventional images of Spring a new evocative power; they prepare the ground for the play of love which is enacted on two different planes; to the old atmosphere of carnal love the music lends a sense of sublimation and spiritualisation.

This is only the mood; the groundwork. This helps the reader and the listener to feel at home; but Jayadeva then builds up the real Vṛndāvana. What really characterizes this world is a chiaroscuro of dark night and moonlight. This interplay reminds us at once of the play of the dark boy Kṛṣṇa and of the fair maiden Rādhā. Throughout the poem darkness and light play in the woodlands of Vṛndāvana. But the darkness is not of fear or negation; it is the mystical darkness, it is a soothing, deep darkness, like the desire of Kṛṣṇa (100.2). This warm darkness seems to be

¹ Zumthor 1963. 121.

² Quoted by Zumthor 1963. 126.

more powerful and all-pervading than the Spring with all its pleasure. This darkness gives at the same time the sense of a cosmic presence and the warmth of a nest which is for Rādhā alone, for the poet alone, for the reader alone. This nest is the kuñja, the bower:

cala sakhi kuñjaṁ satimira-puñjaṁ (96.4)

"Come, friend, to the bower filled with darkness."

or:

sthira-tamaḥ-puñje nikuñje (168.2)

"in the bower heaped with motionless darkness."

The whole movement is towards the bower, towards this all-pervading mystical darkness where Rādhā gets her rest, her freedom in complete union with the lover. The bower is the place of pilgrimage, the pilgrimage of love:

nikuñja-manmatha-mahātīrtha (93.4)

The religious and the profane are given a symbolic transparency. Rādhā has to go through the darkness, which is also Kṛṣṇa:

sabhaya-cakitaṁ vinyasyantīm dr̥ṣaṁ timire pathi (102.1)

"casting glances trembling with fear on the dark path,"

for he is the path and he is also the final goal. She has to traverse the dark forest, covered in obscurity,

yad-anugamanāya niśi gahanam api śīlitam (114.4)

"in search of whom, at night I have frequented (the woods) even though they are deep."

To come to the loveliness of the madhu-yāminī (the mystical night) Rādhā must abandon everything, her house, her family: "at home she languishes" and her home has lost all significance for her -

sīdati Rādhāvāsa-grhe (105.5);
vitatha-ketanā (115.1)

for she languishes in her home - the path of darkness is that which enchants her, calls her; Kṛṣṇa is her all in all.

Slowly the darkness dissolves: the moon rises in the sky and fills the woodlands of Vṛndāvana. Besides this light there is another, purer than the moon's, for the moon is stained - it is the fairness of Rādhā, the light of the quest. This is the light that even Kṛṣṇa seeks; for the quest is mutual. The darkness evokes the unmanifest; light is the manifestation. The mysterious play (rahah-keli) is such that the manifested light seeks to attain the unmanifested; but at the same time the unmanifest seeks to enjoy the manifestation. This is the world-game. Rādhā is the force that drags Kṛṣṇa down to the world: she is

saṁsāra-vāsanā-bandha-śṛṅkhālā (63.1)

"the chain binding him to the desires of the world,"

yet it is by her and through her that Kṛṣṇa can cross the lower darkness of ignorance that he has assumed:

harati dara-timiram ati-ghoram (150.6)

"destroys the terrible frightful darkness."

And we hear the great declaration of Kṛṣṇa:

tvam asi mama bhūṣaṇaṁ tvam asi mama jīvanaṁ
tvam asi mama bhava-jaladhi-ratnam

(152.1)

"You are my ornament, you are my life,
You are the pearl in the ocean of my becoming."

In the world-existence Kṛṣṇa manifests himself in life through Rādhā. The words bhūṣaṇam and ratnam show the concretisation of the unmanifest; the Absolute, unformed, becomes concrete, and expresses itself in beauty and light.

The interplay, the union and final mingling of these two aspects, of the blue darkness of Kṛṣṇa and the whiteness of Rādhā are marvellously expressed in the 11th canto:

kāśmīra-gaura-vapuṣām abhisārikaṇām
ābaddha-rekham abhito ruci-mañjarībhiḥ
etat-tamāla-dala-nīlatamaṁ tamisraṁ
tat-prema-hema-nikaṣopalatāṁ tanoti

(169.3)

"Women with bodies yellow with saffron go to meet their
lovers,
the jewels they wear shed a lustrous streak that encir-
cles the darkness like the blackest tamāla-leaves
and the darkness becomes a touchstone for testing the
gold of their love."

Therefore we discover finally that this Vṛndāvana with its play of light and darkness, its path that leads towards the nest of perfect union and beatitude is an inner world, much more than just a stage set for the satisfaction of carnal desire.

There remains now the play itself, the double quest. Because the quest is mutual, therefore Jayadeva and Vaiṣṇavas call it a play (keli, kṛīḍā). And this play is full of mystery: this idea of the secrecy is emphasized by Jayadeva with the word rahas. - How often he uses this word!

We shall now try to see some of the characteristics of this quest.

The quest and the goal

"All the sides of love, save that of utter despair and final separation," writes Keith about Gītagovinda, "are brilliantly described; all the emotions of longing, of awakened hope, of disappointment, of hot anger against the unfaithful one, of reconciliation, are portrayed by the actors themselves or Rādhā's friend in songs which are perfect in metrical form and display at its highest point the sheer beauty of words of which Sanskrit is pre-eminently capable."¹ These lines describe aptly the theme of the poem, which is a love-poem par excellence. But love does not become poetic unless there are two persons, the lover and the beloved. Here the very choice of the actors "mystifies" the whole story by the use of what Albert Béguin calls "a mystic irony." "... ne peut-on trouver," he writes, "chez le mystique comme chez le poète, l'intervention de l'ironie qui 'mystifie' les objets, se raille de leur signification banale et les transporte sur un autre plan, où ils acquièrent une nouvelle transparence?"²

We have already seen how Jayadeva emphasizes the mystification; he speaks of this love-story as:

adbhuta-Keśava-keli-rahasyam (38.3)

"the mystery of the strange play of Kṛṣṇa;"

the scene has a symbol of significance, and in that background the poet gradually unfolds the adventure of the quest.

After the hymns to Kṛṣṇa when the poem really begins, we find the greatest distance between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa; this is a physical distance. Rādhā has come to the forest in search of

¹ Keith 1920. 194f.

² Béguin 1957. 23.

Kṛṣṇa, but Kṛṣṇa is forgetful of Rādhā, he is sporting with the other maidens. Both Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā have to cross this distance -which is the absence (viraha)- in order to find each other. The distance is spoken of by the word ārād (34.2). The sakhi from far describes the rāsa of Kṛṣṇa with the other gopīs. He is totally involved in the rāsa and has no thought for Rādhā. He is as if caught in the snare of multiplicity. This is wonderfully expressed in Prabandha 4:

śliṣyati kām api cumbati kām api kām api ramayati rāmām
paśyati sa smita-cārutarām apārām anugacchati vāmām

(38.1)

"One girl he embraces, another he kisses, and again
another he fondles,
he looks at one with a prettier smile, then runs in
pursuit of another girl."

Rādhā feels at first the pangs of jealousy, she wants to forget Kṛṣṇa, but her love is stronger than her jealousy, she pardons him even from far (dūrataḥ, 50.2). Her only desire is to meet her lover who is away, hidden in the deep darkness of the night, secretly:

niśi rahasi nilīya vasantam (51.1)

"dwelling secretly concealed in the night."

Kṛṣṇa too becomes aware of the absence, he too suffers. The sakhi reports to Rādhā:

tava virahe Vanamālī sakhi sīdati (91.7)

"O friend, Kṛṣṇa is sorely afflicted by your absence,"

and he impatiently looks at the path:

sacakita-nayanam paśyati tava panthānam (96.2)

"with tremulous eyes he looks for your coming."

The friend urges Rādhā to go and meet her beloved in the dark bower:

mukharam adhīram tyaja mañjīram ripum iva keli-sulolam
cala sakhi kuñjam satimira-puñjam śīlaya nīla-nicolam
(96.3)

"Throw down your restless boisterous anklets - they are
your foes quivering playfully,
put a dark cloak on; go, friend, to the bower heaped
with darkness."

What are the boisterous anklets? They are our outward feelings, our vital sensations, our pride, our mental formulations that keep us from entering into the mystery, into the dark beautiful chamber of God. Therefore Rādhā is asked to abandon them, abandon also all ornaments, her beautiful clothes, and put on the dark veil (nīlanicola). The surface glimmers have to be abandoned before we can go into the dark bower (kuñjam satimirapuñjam). And when one is there one has to be completely naked: vigalitavasanam (97.3). The whole image is certainly erotic, but we are led, through the metaphors, the rhythm, to a world of mysterious undertones where we seem to perceive the mystery of divine union.

But the pain of separation is so intense that Rādhā is unable to move; she can only suffer, yearn, aspire. The fire of pain has opened new horizons of vision before her; for she sees now everywhere Kṛṣṇa, and she identifies herself with him. This is the union in imagination and thought; this is the fore-taste of the final experience:

paśyati diśi diśi rahasi bhavantam (105.3)

"She sees you on every side, secretly"

and further in the same song:

Madhu-ripur aham iti bhāvanā-śīlā (106.6)

"She imagines that she is Kṛṣṇa."

But this is not enough; the poet leads us through the different vicissitudes of love. Then finally Kṛṣṇa appears before Rādhā at the end of the day (dinānte, 150.3). Kṛṣṇa is incomplete without Rādhā, as Rādhā without Kṛṣṇa. It is their union that destroys the carnal love:

smara-garala-khaṇḍanam (154.5)

"destroying of the poison of passion."

But still there remain the last vestiges of human bondage; the veils, the clothes have to be shed. The nuptial bed is prepared in the deep darkness, -

dr̥ṣṭimōṣe pradoṣe (163.3)

"at the nightfall that covers the eyesight."

But Rādhā has still her lovely ornaments that reflect the lesser light of our earthly knowledge and love. This glimmer has to disappear before the perfect union is possible. Rādhā has finally come to the bower, come from very far:

āgamitāsi vidūram (186.3)

"you have been made to come from very far,"

says Kṛṣṇa. The distances have vanished; the viraha vanishes like the veil that covers Rādhā's breasts:

viraham ivāpanayāmi payodhara-rodhakam uṛasi dukūlam

(187.2)

"I shall remove the veil on your bosom that conceals
your breasts as if it were absence."

All barriers fall down, all coverings disappear, she appears naked before the lover.

This is the consummation, the goal. The quest is ended. Yet it is not the end, for love is eternal; the quest is unending, the play continues. Therefore in the morning Rādhā asks Kṛṣṇa to give her back her phenomenal appearance; she puts back her clothes, garlands, the glittering ornaments, the jingling anklets.

The quest, the pain of separation start anew, in order to lead towards the joy of union. For the Vaiṣṇava the bliss of oneness would be monotony if it was not possible to renew the experience. Speaking of the yoga of love, Sri Aurobindo writes: "Where first there is love and attraction, the relations between the Divine and the soul may still for long be chequered with misunderstanding and offence, jealousy and wrath; strife and the quarrels of love, hope, despair and the pain of absence and separation. We throw up all the passions of the heart against him, till they are purified into a sole ecstasy of bliss and oneness. But that too is monotony; it is not possible for the tongue of human speech to tell all the utter unity and all the eternal variety of the ānanda of divine love."¹

The poem of Jayadeva has expressed, with the help of music and poetry, that which ordinarily is inexpressible in our human speech. The image of eternal love has given a strong body to the

¹ Sri Aurobindo 1972.21.579.

experience. Rādhā's quest which is also Jayadeva's, lies beyond our ordinary mental perception. Jayadeva had therefore to create a poetical language in which the words are musical and luminous entities rather than sense-laden counters of meaning. "The essential problem of poetic expression," writes Dimock, "is the communication through image and symbol of those intuitions and perceptions that often lie beyond consciousness and that cannot be expressed by what is often called 'denotative language'."¹

The Gītagovinda, we may conclude, is certainly an erotic poem, but it is much more: it is symbolic, it opens up a world of mystical perception. One may only enjoy its music, another may enjoy the erotic sentiment (vilāsa-kalā), but a real rasika will find also the joy of the mystical marriage of the individual soul and the Deity.

¹ Dimock 1966. 4.

ABBREVIATIONS

- Bhāg.Pur. Mahārṣi-Vedavyāsa-praṇītaṃ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatamahā-
purāṇam (sacitraṃ sarala-Hindīvyākhyāsaḥitam.
2tīya saṃskaraṇ. Gorakhpur Saṃ. 2008. 2 vols.
Skandha, adhyāya and verse.
- Gītāgovinda Gītāgovindakāvyaṃ, ed. Nārāyaṇa Rāma Ācārya.
Nirnaya-Sagar Press, 9th ed. Bombay 1949. Page
and line.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barthes, Roland
1966 Critique et Vérité. Editions du Seuil.
Paris. Collection "Tel Quel."
- Béguin, Albert
1957 Poésie de la présence de Chrétien de Troyes
à Pierre Emmanuel. Editions de la Baconnière,
Neuchâtel. Collection des cahiers du Rhône 95.
- Bosquet, Alain
1961 Verbe et Vertige. Situations de la poésie
contemporaine. Hachette, Paris.
- Cattaui, Georges
1965 Orphisme et Prophétie chez les poètes fran-
çais 1850-1950. Plon, Paris.

- Dimock, Edward C.J.
1966 The place of the Hidden Moon. Erotic Mysticism in the Vaiṣṇavasahajiyā Cult of Bengal. University of Chicago, Chicago.
- Gupta, Nolini Kanta
1970 Collected works. Vol. II: Essays on Mysticism. Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry.
- Keith, A. Berriedale
1920 A History of Sanskrit Literature. London 1920. Oxford University Press, London. Reprints.
- Lagarde, André and Michard, Laurent
1961 XIXe Siècle. Les grands auteurs français du programme avec les principaux auteurs belges d'expression française présentés par Robert Guiette. Tome V. Paris.
- Lévi, Sylvain
1937 Le Gīta-Govinda. In: Mémorial Sylvain Lévi. Paris. First published as a foreword to G. Courtillier's edition of the Gītagovinda (1904).
- Macdonell, A. Arthur
1971 A History of Sanskrit Literature. Second Indian Edition, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi.
- Mallarmé, Stéphane
1949 Divagations. Fasquelle, Paris. Bibliothèque Charpentier.

Ogden, C.K. and Richards, J.A.

- 1966 The Meaning of Meaning. A study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism. With Supplementary Essays by B. Malinowski and F.G. Crookshank. Tenth edition, sixth impression. Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London.

Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli

- 1962 Indian Philosophy. Seventh impression. George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London. 2 vols. Volume and page.

Raymond, Marcel

- 1966 De Baudelaire au surréalisme. Edition nouvelle revue et remaniée. Corti, Paris.

Sen, Sukumar

- 1970 Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihās (The History of Bengali Literature) Part I, tome I. Fifth edition. Eastern Publishers, Calcutta.

Sri Aurobindo

- 1952 On Translating Poetry. In "Mother India," Dec. 1952. Pondicherry.
- 1972 Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library. De Luxe Edition. 30 Vols. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Vol. 14: The Foundations of Indian Culture. Vol. 20 and 21: The Synthesis of Yoga. Volume and page.

Wellek, René and Warren, Austin

- 1968 Theory of Literature. 3rd ed. Penguin, Harmondsworth. Reprint.

Zumthor, Paul

1963

Langue et Techniques poétiques à l'époque
romane (XIe - XIIIe siècles). Klincksieck,
Paris. Bibliothèque française et romane.
Série C: Études littéraires IV.

Omslag: E.K.Post; naar een oud Indisch voorbeeld
Offsetdruk: Reproductie-afdeling van de Faculteit der Letteren
Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

